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Housekeepers' Chat

Tues. Dec. 6/27.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Outwitting the Cockroach." Approved by Bureaus of Home Economics and Entomology, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture. Information about cockroaches from Bureau of Entomology. Bulletin available: Farmers' Bulletin 658, "Cockroaches."

Note: No recipes or menu today, since the title subject does not combine well with a discussion of food.

--ooOoo--

The other day I stopped at the department store to buy some odds and ends. I had just purchased a card of buttons, when I noted a bashful young man standing in the aisle, looking very much excited. His eyes roved here and there. He seemed terribly upset about something.

I was buying Needles, Assorted Sizes, when I saw the young man walk hastily up one aisle, and down the next. He rushed past the needle counter so fast that he knocked a package from my hand.

"I do beg your pardon!" he exclaimed, "but could you tell me where I'll find a kitchen knife?" I must find a kitchen knife, before I go home!"

"This is the needle and pin counter," I explained. "You won't find kitchen knives here."

"Needles and pins, needles and pins, when a man marries, his trouble begins," quoted the young man. "I must find a kitchen knife. My wife said to me this morning, 'Tunis,' she said, 'if you come home again, without bringing me a kitchen knife, there will be trouble!'"

The young man looked so terrified that I decided to take him in charge. "In the basement," I said, "you will find the kitchen equipment. Come with me, Tunis, and I'll help you buy a knife, for your wife."

"Thanks a lot," said Tunis. "What kind of a knife do you think would please her most? Her name is Grace Louisa."

"That being the case," I said, "let's get her the very best kitchen knife we can find. One with a handle that is large enough to fit her hand nicely. A kitchen knife that is too small forces the use of the small muscles of the hand, and therefore cramps the hand. A good rule is never to use a small muscle when you can use a large one, for the latter is less tiring. We'll select a knife in which the metal extends down at least one-half the length of the handle, and it should be riveted to the handle.

"As for the metal, stainless steel knives are satisfactory for fruits, and some of the small vegetables. Stainless steel does not form an acid, nor leave a

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dark stain, when used with such foods as lemons, apples, and potatoes. Stainless steel blades are excellent for fruit and vegetable knives, but they do not hold an edge well. The old-fashioned steel gives the longest service under hard usage. Why not get your wife a couple of knives, a paring knife of stainless steel, and a butcher knife of tempered steel?"

"I shall do that," said Tunis. "Is there something else I could get her?"

"How about an oven thermometer?" I suggested.

"Just the thing," said Tunis. "She will be so glad I thought of that!"

The salesgirl wrapped up two kitchen knives, and a white enameled oven thermometer, and Tunis went away whistling.

I wish I had asked him his name and address, so that I might send him a Radio cookbook.

We have one important question on the list today; this question deals with cockroaches.

Roaches are among the commonest, and the most offensive, of the insects which infest homes and offices. Wherever they occur, in large numbers, they leave an offensive, sickening odor, well known as the "roachy" odor. This odor cannot be removed from shelves and dishes, without washing with soap, and boiling water. Food supplies so tainted are beyond redemption. It sometimes happens that cupboard shelves become contaminated with this peculiar roachy odor, which is imparted to the dishes, and then to everything served in them -- particularly liquids, such as coffee and tea.

Roaches are often spread from house to house by being introduced with supplies, furniture, goods, and so forth. I heard a curious story about roaches the other day. It seems that they sometimes grow dissatisfied with standards of living in their little communities, and pick up and leave. Two scientists in Washington, D. C., tell of seeing an army of thousands of roaches leave their old quarters and start on a search for a more favorable location. This migratory instinct probably accounts for the way new houses suddenly become over-run with these disgusting pests.

In houses, roaches are most often found in pantries and kitchens, and in the neighborhood of fireplaces, where it is warm and comfortable. For the same reasons, they are often abundant in the oven rooms of bakeries, or wherever the temperature is maintained above normal. During the day, they hide behind baseboards or furniture. Cockroaches are so flat, and so thin, that they can squeeze themselves into small cracks, out of the reach of all enemies. In fact, you may never see the ugly things, unless you surprise them at one of their midnight banquets. Sometimes when a housekeeper comes into her kitchen or pantry suddenly, at night, she will hear a sound of the rustling of numerous objects. If the light is turned on quickly, she may see the pests scattering to their hiding places. No use trying to catch them, for they scurry off before you can say "Jack Robinson" -- or whatever it is a housewife says, when she sees cockroaches in her nice clean kitchen.

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Cockroaches feed on all sorts of dreadful things -- sometimes they even imitate the King of the Cannibal Islands. When they can't find anything else to eat, they attack woolens, leather shoes, leather upholstery, and the cloth and leather bindings of books. They are especially fond of the paste used in making book covers. They will even eat off the gold lettering on books, to get at the paste underneath.

Cockroaches cause a great deal of damage on shipboard. It is said that entire supplies of ship biscuits have been eaten or ruined by cockroaches. However, we shall let some one else worry about the sea-going cockroaches.

Roaches will not stay in a place which does not provide food material. Therefore, it is up to us to see that kitchens, pantries, and so forth, are scrupulously clean, and to keep food material stored in insect-proof containers, or in ice-boxes.

Perhaps you think that keeping food out of an office is a simple matter. It would be, if the efficient office workers didn't fill the corners of their desk-drawers with cookies, and chocolate candy, and sandwiches. Such foods leave an attractive odor, and that is enough to cause a whole family of cockroaches to move in.

Roaches as household pests may be controlled by the use of various poisons, repellents, and fumigants, and by trapping. I shall give you the remedy which seems to me most practicable, in the home.

One of the most simple means of ridding a house, or an office, of roaches is dusting with commercial sodium fluoride-- s-o-d-i-u-m f-l-u-o-r-i-d-e. Use the sodium fluoride pure, or diluted one-half, with some substance such as powdered gypsum, or flour.

With a dust gun, or blower, dust the sodium fluoride thoroughly over shelves, tables, floors, and the runways and hiding places of the roaches. The immediate effect is to cause the insects to come out of their retreats, and rush about more or less blindly. In a few hours, they die, and can be swept up and burned. With the sodium fluoride method, roaches can be completely exterminated within 24 hours.

Sodium fluoride is a poison to humans, and to cats, dogs, and other pets. When it is used in exposed places, accessible to these animals, keep the rooms closed until the sodium fluoride is swept up. Be sure to store it away from the children.

If you are interested in the other methods of getting rid of cockroaches, write to me, and I shall send you a copy of the Cockroach bulletin. This bulletin is free.

Tomorrow, we shall talk about parlors.

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